Rand "The Virtue of Selfishness"*
Shafer-Landau "Morality and Religion"*

1. An altruistic action, in common speech, is one in which you sacrifice yourself for the sake of someone else. On Rand's view, altruism is elevated to a normative ethical theory (i.e. a theory which tells us, in all cases, what we ought to do). State this theory. (Your answer should have an "ought" in it.)

2. **According to Rand, when it comes to distributing goods, there are two questions that must be answered:**
   1) what counts as a good thing?
   2) how should we distribute these good things?
   How, according to Rand, does altruism answer (or not answer) these two questions?

3. **This question asks about the possibility of having bad desires. Suppose that the only time that you act upon those desires is in a virtual world so that no one gets hurt by these desires? Imagine for example that there is a very elaborate virtual reality machine that can simulate down to the feeling, touch, and smell just about any experience. If I satisfy my desires in this virtual world only and never in the real world, are these desires in any sense bad ones? Explain how this is possible or give a persuasive example.**

4. Rand disagrees with altruists who say that pursing your own interest is immoral because it hurts other people. But, she thinks that there might be other reasons that something could be wrong besides for the fact that it hurts other people. Can you think of an example? [Hint: think of question #3]

Preamble to questions 5-9:

Shafer-Landau introduces us to a revised version of a question that Socrates posed to Euthyphro:

   "*Does God command us to do actions because they are morally right, or are actions morally right because God commands them?*" (p. 67)

Divine Command Theory goes with the second option and holds that actions are morally right (or wrong) because God commands them (or forbids them). Shafer-Landau thinks that we should go with the first one and believe that God commands or forbids things based on their morality.

5. Marijuana is legal in Colorado but illegal in Texas. What's more the Colorado legislature forbids marijuana and the Texas legislature permits it. Do you think

that the Texas legislature forbids it because it is illegal or is it illegal because the Texas legislature forbids it.

6. Consider holy water. Is holy water holy because it is blessed by a priest or does a priest bless it because it is holy. Before the water is blessed by a priest is there anything special about the water?

7. Shafer-Landau says that those who accept Divine Command Theory and those who reject it can both accept the fact that everything God forbids is immoral and everything immoral is forbidden by God. So what is the difference between those who accept and those who reject the Divine Command Theory (71). Explain.

8. **Assume that you are a Divine Command Theorist who believes that actions are morally wrong because God commands them. Now consider murder, stealing, and breaking your promises. God has clearly forbidden these actions, but is there any reason why God forbade these actions than some others? Do these actions have anything in common that marks them off from other actions that God hasn't forbidden like helping others, having friends, and being honest? [You may want to consider your answer to 6 here.]**

9. According to a Divine Command Theorist why is it wrong to disobey God's commands? Is this a problem for Divine Command Theory?